



### When You Come to Take the Test

Please check in at the Outpatient  
Registration desk at Greene County  
Medical Center in Jefferson on:

Day: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### Do you have other questions?

You may direct any other questions or  
concerns you may have regarding your  
upcoming cardiac stress test to the staff:

**Cardiac Management**  
**515-386-0469**



#### Hours:

Monday - Friday  
8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

(515) 386-0469  
FAX: (515) 386-2017

**Greene County Medical Center**  
1000 West Lincolnway  
Jefferson, IA 50129

[gcmhealth.com](http://gcmhealth.com)

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# Preparing for a Stress Electrocardiogram

Care Management Services



An Affiliate of  UnityPoint Health

## What is a stress electrocardiogram (ECG)?

An exercise ECG test allows doctors to learn how well the heart functions when it is made to work harder. This test can help detect heart problems that may not be apparent at rest. The exercise ECG test is done while you walk on a treadmill. During the test, an ECG records the electrical activity of your heart and blood pressure will be taken intermittently.

It is normal to feel tired and short of breath during strenuous exercise. However, if you develop chest pain or become extremely short of breath, this may indicate a heart problem. The heart rate and blood pressure normally rise during exercise. An abnormal heart rate or a fall in blood pressure may indicate heart disease.

## What does it show?

Certain changes in the ECG tracing may indicate that the heart muscle is not getting enough oxygen-rich blood. Sometimes the ECG during exercise shows abnormal heart rhythms.

This test is especially useful in diagnosing blockages in the coronary arteries. When the coronary arteries are blocked or narrowed, the heart muscle may not be getting enough oxygen during exercises. This often results in symptoms of chest pain and abnormal changes on the ECG.

## What happens during the test?

The exercise ECG test will be performed in the Cardiac Management department of the medical center. A trained technician will place several electrodes on your chest to allow recording of the ECG during exercise. The electrodes are connected by wires to an ECG machine. A cuff will be applied to your arm to monitor your blood pressure.

Your blood pressure will be checked every few minutes, and the ECG will be carefully watched for abnormal changes. You will be instructed to report any symptoms such as chest pain, shortness of breath, leg fatigue or dizziness.

## How long does it take?

The test may end when you become too tired to continue or when you experience significant symptoms. Other times the test may be stopped when you reach your peak heart rate based on your age.

## Is it safe?

The exercise test is generally safe. A small amount of risk does exist, however, because it stresses the heart rhythms and a heart attack could occur. Experienced personnel are available to handle any emergency.

## The Results

A complete interpretation may take one to two days. The results will be sent to your doctor, who will then contact you. The information gained from the exercise test helps your doctor make an accurate diagnosis and develop a treatment plan that's best for you. If the test is abnormal or inconclusive, your doctor may order additional tests.

## Preparing for the Test

If you take a beta blocker or any other medication listed here, DO NOT take them the night before or the morning of the test. It is a good idea to check with your doctor first if you are on a heart medication not listed here. He or she may want you to hold that medication prior to your test.

- Acebutolol-Sectal
- Metoprolol-Lopressor
- Nadolol-Corgard
- Timolol-Blocadren
- Verpamil-Isptin/calan
- Coreg-Carvedilol
- Pindolol-Visken
- Diltiazem-Cardizem/Dilacor
- Propranolol-Inderal
- Atenolol-Tenormin
- Labetalol-Trandate/Normodyne
- Bystolic

**DO NOT EAT OR DRINK THREE HOURS PRIOR TO THE TEST.** This will prevent the possibility of nausea, which may accompany vigorous exercise after eating. If you are diabetic and take medications for diabetes, you will need special instructions from your doctor.

**WEAR LOOSE, COMFORTABLE CLOTHING THAT IS SUITABLE FOR EXERCISE.** Men usually don't wear a shirt during the test and women generally wear a lightweight cape that is provided. You should also wear comfortable walking shoes or sneakers.

## Information to Bring with You

On the day of your cardiac stress test, you will be asked to supply the following information:

- Your height
- Your weight
- Previous cardiac history (dates of any heart attacks, heart surgeries, angiograms, etc.)
- Your recent symptoms
- A complete list of your medications

It may be helpful for you to have this information in written form.